



**CV Writing
Handout
(Use with Sample
CV Handout)**

Creating a Great CV

While there is no one right way to prepare your CV, by following some simple guidelines you can ensure that your CV is an effective personal marketing tool. First, some general tips:

1. Research, Research, Research

If CV writing is not your strong point, ask for help – you only have one chance to make a good first impression. Research thoroughly before you begin. Check out the company website and social media channels to learn about the company, its values, products, customers and competitors. Read the Job Description and Job Advertisement and Identify the key skills that the successful person needs. You will then be able to highlight these skills in your CV. When you have a CV that you are proud of, update it continually to reflect your changing career story. Then you'll be ready to apply for new opportunities as they arise.

2. Pass the 30 Second Test

When your CV lands on an employer's desk or opens on a recruiter's tablet or PC screen, you have from six to 30 seconds to get your message across. That's because many employers and recruiters don't read CVs, they simply scan them for key phrases and information that shows if you're the right fit for the job. To identify the key phrases and information you'll need to study the Job Description and Job Advertisement.

3. Outsmart the robots

Some employers and recruiters (60% of UK employers and 98% of Fortune top 500 companies) use automated applicant tracking systems (ATSs) to filter out CVs that do not meet their requirements. If you are asked to complete an online application or to upload your CV to a website, you are most likely dealing with an ATS. This combined with the 30 Second Test (see 2. Above) means it's doubly important to include information about your key skills in a clearly readable format.

4. One page or two?

A long, rambling CV will not make you a more impressive candidate and it could irritate your prospective employer. As a general rule, if you have less than three years' work experience, aim for a one-page CV. Otherwise aim for two-pages or less. Three pages are for careers of over 10 years – but even then, only if your qualifications and career achievements are exceptional.

5. CV Presentation

- Use a simple, clear CV format. There are many CV builder apps online but do make sure that the template you use is appropriate to the company and country you are targeting.
- Use standard A4 white paper and save your CV in a readable format such as Microsoft Word or as a Portable Document Format (PDF). Note that some recruiters do not accept



PDFs and many ATS machines can't read PDFs. It's safer to save your CV in a **.doc** format such as Microsoft Word.

- Give your CV an appropriate file name, for example, John Murphy CV.
- Choose a standard font such as Arial, Calibri or Times New Roman – avoid elaborate typefaces, colours and designs which can be confusing to machines – and humans!
- Make the best use of the available space by keeping your CV clutter free – select normal sized margins (2.54 cm) and font sizes of 11 or 12pt.
- There is no need to put the heading Curriculum Vitae on your CV – it's self-explanatory
- Ensure consistency of style by keeping dates in the same format.
- Use bullet points instead of full sentences and paragraphs.
- Do not use unfamiliar abbreviations or terms that need further explanation.
- Use plain English and avoid jargon and clichés.
- Follow the instructions given in the Job Advertisement. Common instructions include: *email your CV and a separate cover letter; email your CV and include a cover note in the body of your email; Complete an online Application Form.* You would be surprised by the number of applications that are screened out because the applicant has failed to follow simple instructions.
- Ensure your CV is error free – check your spelling and grammar and ensure that information such as employment dates and company names and addresses are correct. Don't just rely on spell-check: print it out, proofread it and ask a friend to check it too.
- Don't insert photographs or attach educational certificates unless you are specifically asked to do so.

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6. CV Content (see Sample CV Handout)

Contact Details

- **Name** – large Type (14 or 16 pt.)
- **Address** – type it all on one line to save space
- **email** – make sure it conveys a responsible impression (not wineoclock@gmail.com or madcow367@yahoo.ie. Don't use email addresses that incorporate your age or date of birth
- **LinkedIn** – for some jobs it may be useful to include your LinkedIn URL. If you haven't got a LinkedIn page, set one up and ask previous employers or clubs you have volunteered with to post recommendations for you. Once you have set up your page you can edit your LinkedIn address to include your name so that people can easily find your profile.

*Be aware that prospective employers could look at your social media pages. If these pages don't paint you in a positive light, change your privacy settings.

Do not include a "Career Objective" section. Employers know that you are interested in working in a company like theirs – otherwise you would not have applied. Don't waste precious CV space



by telling them what you want from a career – they will be more interested in what you can offer them and in how you'll make a difference to their organisation.

B Profile

The space on your CV under your contact details is prime real estate. It's where the reader's eye will rest first. In three or four lines, list your main selling points in relation to the job on offer. Avoid tired phrases and clichés such as: *highly motivated, team-oriented, customer-focussed, target-driven*. Instead try to give the employer a snapshot of you in action. If you can include one or two genuine achievements, you will make a greater impact. For example:

"An experienced customer service agent with a Marketing degree, excellent computer skills and a flawless attendance record. I enjoy serving existing customers and winning new business. In 2019 I was voted customer service agent of the year by my team for exceeding my sales target by 10%. I am thoroughly dependable and make a strong contribution to team spirit."

C Key Skills

Here's where your preparation is crucial. The key skills you list should be completely relevant to the job you are applying for. By highlighting these skills in one place on your CV you make it easier for the hiring person or ATS machine to match you to the job. The skills you list can be: Employability Skills such as leadership, teamwork, organisation skills; Technical Skills such as Sage Accounting Payroll, Microsoft Excel, Reach Forklift experience and Personal Qualities such as reliable, enthusiastic, creative, punctual.

D Employment

Start with your most recent job and work backwards. List *from* and *to* dates in month and year format. Include the name and address of each employer and the title of the job you held. Don't just list duties – show how you achieved high standards in everything you did. For example, instead of writing *"stocking shelves"* try *"Ensured that shelves were stocked with neatly displayed, in-date products with front-facing labels."* Use 4-6 bullet points to indicate what you did in recent jobs and reduce the number of bullet points for less recent jobs. Where possible, quantify the results you achieved in each job – for example:

- *Increased sales of Cheeky Cat Cuisine by 25% in 2019*
- *Attracted 85 new online customers through my weekly blog, Cheeky Cat Capers, which had a following of 10,000 pet lovers*
- *Reduced stock damage by 20%, by introducing a set of guidelines for stock-handling*
- *As a member of a factory project team, I identified waste saving measures leading to a cost saving of €5,000 in the month of January 2020 alone.*

E Education

List your educational qualifications in reverse chronological order (type the title of each qualification out in full and avoid unfamiliar abbreviations). If you are a school leaver you may want to include your Leaving Certificate or equivalent examination grades. If you have recently



completed higher education and have limited work experience, then list your subjects and grades and any special projects or assignments you completed during your studies.

F

Training and Development

Demonstrate your commitment to self-development by listing all relevant training and development you have completed to date. On your CV, note the name of the course or qualification, the provider or awarding body and the completion date. Tell the truth and do not try to gloss over incomplete courses of study.

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Interests

It's not essential to list your interests on your CV, though for certain job applications it may be an advantage. List interests that are relevant to the job or that demonstrate qualities like organisation skills, teamwork, leadership, dedication and technical ability. If you have notched up some achievements, include them. For example:

- *Soccer – I play on the 3rd team of The Rovers Club and organise an annual soccer marathon to raise funds to upgrade our clubhouse*
- *Credit Union Volunteer – I have been a member of the Credit Control Committee in ABC Credit Union since 2017*
- *Website Design – I design blogs and websites for friends using WordPress*

Tell the truth – if you can't comfortably talk about an interest, don't include it. Playing video games, watching Netflix and shopping for clothes may be your true interests but don't list them on your CV unless they are relevant to your application.

H

References

You have two options here: you can leave this section out altogether or you can ask your referees in advance for permission to include their contact details in your CV. No doubt you will provide references if asked, so don't include the overused "References available on request" line. If you have limited work experience, a referee can be a lecturer, a manager of a voluntary organisation that you assisted or any other credible person who will vouch for you.

Print out the Job Advertisement, Job Description and any other information provided by the recruiter as it may be removed from recruitment websites once the closing date for applications has passed.

Start preparing for your interview as soon as possible as you may be called at short notice. And finally, if your phone rings and you don't recognise the number, answer in a business-like way – it could be your future employer inviting you to an interview.....